

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP**

District Headquarters, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Monday, December 16, 2013, 5:00 PM

WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP MINUTES

ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS – Newton Cook, WRAC Recreation Issues Chair

- Mr. Cook introduced himself and welcomed attendees.

ITEM 2 - RECREATION DISCUSSION, UPDATES, FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

- Future presentations requested included;
 - District's Cattle Leasing Process. Staff informed the group that the District's leasing policy is also available on-line for review.
 - A-1 Flow Equalization Basin Update
 - C-139 Annex Mitigation Area Access
 - C-43 / BOMA Project Update

Attendees expressed the following concerns or made the following announcements:

- The Florida Wildlife Federation expressed concerns regarding a panther that was shot on the Big Cypress National Preserve and announced that an investigation is underway and a reward is being offered.
- The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has been working with the District and sportsmen's association volunteers to provide hunting opportunities for disabled veterans. The first waterfowl hunt is tentatively planned for January 25, 2014 in STA 1 West.
- The Florida Airboat Association announced an upcoming quarterly meeting in Water Conservation Area 2 at the Broward County Club Camp "The Boars Nest" on January 26, 2014.
- The Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association will have its annual "Youth Day" on February 1, 2014 at Corbett Youth Camp.
- Scott Sommer, a Hunt Master with the Youth Hunting Program of Florida, announced that 20 children have participated in the youth hunting program on District owned lands since the end of October and thanked the agency for opening up its lands to teach the youth how to safely hunt and care for Florida's natural environment.
- The Dupuis Horseman Association expressed concerns regarding the volunteer campground host program on Dupuis.
- Attendees expressed concerns regarding late meeting notification for the Dupuis Management Plan. Staff assured the group that going forward notices will be more timely.

- The Florida Sportsmen's Conservation association announced that four arrests were made in connection with the Hungryland check station arson and progress continues to be made to design signs for District property announcing rewards for vandalism on public lands.
- The Kissimmee River Valley Sportsmen's Association announced that the 26th Annual Lake Kissimmee cleanup is scheduled for April 2014.

ITEM 3 – Overview of the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society Chapter, Margaret England, President:

- Margaret England, President of the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society provided an overview of chapter history and current initiatives.
- Since 2005 there have been 185 guided birding trips conducted by the Chapter and 202 confirmed species of birds identified within STA5.

ITEM 4 – Recreational Opportunities at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – Rolf Olson, Project Leader

- Rolf Olson, Project Leader, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge provided an update on the Refuge and discussed hunting opportunities and challenges.
 - Attendees questioned opening up alligator hunting and expanding duck hunting permits in the northern Refuge canals. Mr. Olson addressed those concerns by stating that more evaluation needed to be done on adjacent properties in order to determine the proper mix of hunting on that particular portion of the refuge.
 - Mr. Olson stated that the Refuge is currently working with the District on trading a portion of the Strazzulla property for a portion of Compartment D.

ITEM 5- South Florida Water Management District South Region Overview - Jason Smith, Land Manager, SFWMD:

- Jason Smith, Land Manager, SFWMD, provided a presentation on managing land in the South Region including the challenges associated with managing natural areas adjacent to urban communities.
- Attendees thanked the District for providing the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area for public use.

ITEM 6 - Public Use Updates – Bijaya Kattel and Jerry Krenz, Senior Planners, Land Stewardship Section, SFWMD:

- The following updates were provided:
 - Rolling Meadows Project Recreation Opportunities
 - Staff is proposing to re-establish the area into the existing Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area for the 2014 spring turkey season, pending Governing Board approval, in response to changes in the construction schedule and public requests to provide turkey hunting opportunities on the area.
 - Attendees provided comment on current weekend-only access to the property and changes in the permitting and construction schedule. Attendees also expressed concerns regarding the planned installation of five water control structures in Catfish Creek and the effect this could have on navigability.
 - Staff clarified that the current weekend-only access to Rolling Meadows is due to contractors and staff conducting work in the area during the week.

- Attendees also thanked the District for opening this area to the public for an interim period.
- Recreation opportunities in stormwater treatment areas
 - Staff announced that STA 5/6 is now open to the public for recreation from Friday to Monday during daylight hours.
 - The availability of fishing in the external canals of STAs was presented. A discussion was held regarding fishing internally within the STAs and possible effects on water quality sampling results. Attendees believe that fishing can occur on STAs if proper signage were installed informing fisherman of data collection stations.
 - Mr. Cook asked if expanded waterfowl hunting could take place in STA 6. Staff responded that there is not a lot of water in that area and hopes that in the future hunting can be expanded as vegetation management in the cells completes the conversions.
 - Staff discussed the successes of the Youth Hunting Program of Florida and the need for formalizing program guidelines in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- Water Conservation Area 2 Volunteer Clean-Up Project
 - Staff provided a follow-up on activities related to stakeholder requests that the District help facilitate and provide dumpsters for volunteers to clean-up research equipment that is no longer being utilized within WCA 2.
 - The clean-up is scheduled to take place around Earth Day in April. Plans will be finalized at the WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop in March.
 - Billy Boatwright showed the group pictures of locations of abandoned structures and locations that may be ideal for dumpster placement and is currently gathering a group of volunteers that will help with the effort.

Adjourn

Mr. Cook announced that the next WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop would be held on March 17, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 PM.